

Indian and women's groups protest sale of Custer's Revenge video game

ALBUQUERQUE--A coalition of Indian and women's groups here is protesting the sale of a video game which they say shows General George Custer of Little Big Horn fame raping a bound Indian woman.

But the owner of an Albuquerque video game store says the publicity

resulting from the protests has been good for sales of the game, which is called "Custer's Revenge."

And a spokesman for the California company that manufactures the game says the game will not be pulled from the market despite the protests in Albuquerque and in other cities across

the nation.

In a letter to the *Albuquerque Journal*, the Albuquerque Rape Crisis Center condemned "Custer's Revenge" and two other X-rated games manufactured by American Multiple Industries of Northridge, Calif.

The letter said the center "deplores the fact

that once again a segment of the American entertainment industry resorts to violence against women and ethnic minorities as a way of furthering its profits."

The controversy has received extensive newspaper and television coverage. A front-page story in the *Albuquerque Journal* said the "Custer's Revenge" game "features a caricatured Custer, clad only in a blue hat, red scarf and black boots, dodging electronic arrows to copulate with a bound and naked Indian woman. Each time the two are mated, the Indian woman throws up her legs to the strains of a bugle charge."

The letter from the Albuquerque Rape Crisis Center charged that all three X-rated games "convey a number of false and insidious messages: that rape is an acceptable and legitimate behavior,

that rape is fun to do and fun to watch and fun to help others do, that rape provides sexual gratification, that women of color are particularly acceptable targets of rape, that women enjoy being raped, and even when they say 'No,' they mean 'Yes.'"

The letter called rape "an act of violence and aggression" and said studies have demonstrated links between violence in the media and violence in actual life. Violence in the media, the letter charged, can teach children to act violently and make them "desensitized to aggression."

Toni Barela, office manager of the Rape Crisis Center, said the center had been informed of the offensive video games by the Albuquerque Indian Health Board. The

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health board held a news conference last week to urge consumers to boycott the stores where the games are sold and to write to the manufacturer with demands that they be removed from the market.

"Do the creators of these games of racial and sexual degradation understand the implications of their actions, or are they so ignorant, greedy and immoral that they can't see the consequences of these activities?" asked the chairman of the health board, Tony Secatero.

The public relations director of the YWCA charged that "Custer's Revenge" "insults and denigrates women, Indians--and men."

After the press conference, protest leaders went to the Video Visions store in Albuquerque's northeast heights, where they presented a copy of a petition to the store owner.

In a telephone interview with the Navajo Times store owner David Allen described the controversy as "a tempest in a teapot."

Allen said the publicity stemming from the controversy had been good for sales. He said that on Thursday and Friday of last week he sold 15 of the "General Custer" games. Allen said the protests of the women's and Indian groups are "only going to help those they're against."

Allen said "Custer's Revenge" was "trivial and comical" and insisted that the images depicted in the game were inoffensive. "An unbiased person would call it a comic novelty," he said.

The store owner also suggested that the protestors were misplacing their anger. "I think it would be too big a battle for them to protest the real obscenities of the world...There's a lot of horror in the world, and I don't think a video game is the place to start protesting." Allen said that magazines whose cover photographs show bound women being assaulted by armed men would be a more suitable target for protest.

Allen's tone was duplicated by Mark Bruce, a spokesman for American Multiple Industries, who said "Custer's Revenge" was "just a silly little game" whose purpose was to provide humorous entertainment.

Bruce said that the copulation between Custer and the Indian woman could not be characterized as rape because "they don't fight." And he minimized the effect of the game's action, describing the Custer and Indian women in the game as "computerized stick figures."

Bruce said that in the two months since "Custer's Revenge" has been on the market it has sparked controversy across the country. He said he has 1,000 clippings of articles covering the public outcry.

Bruce also said the publicity has been good for sales. "It is unfortunate, but probably the worse the publicity the better the sales. The more the women's groups decry how bad it is, the more people want to go out and buy it."

Bruce said the market for the game consists of people "who like a dirty joke" and pointed out that the game is for home use and is not available to the arcades frequented by young people.

"If children play these games, it's not the manufacturer's fault," he said. "It's the parents' fault."

He said that the company would not consider removing "Custer's Revenge" from the market. The company is only a year old, he said, and removing the game would be "a real burden." He said the company's owners had no intention of offending anyone and were "just a couple of guys trying to make a buck."

Bruce said it was difficult for him to believe the intensity of the anger of the protesters. "It's probably indicative of the fact that there has been so little activity among these

groups. They've picked on the nearest thing they could rally around."

Bruce said Indian organizations in Southern California have reacted angrily to the game. He said the company's offices were vandalized several weeks ago and that the company has received other threats since then.

(Northridge, the company's home, is in the San Fernando Valley, which has become famous as the home of the hideous artificial language of the

"Valley Girls.")

"Custer's Revenge" is the best seller "by far" of the three games made by American Multiple Industries, Bruce said. Sales have been particularly good in New York, where there has been extensive coverage of protests against the game, he said, adding that while the game normally sells for \$50, demand in New York has been so great that some stores are charging as much as \$99.

David Allen said the executives of American

Multiple Industries are "geniuses at promotion."

"All across the country, whenever their games are introduced, there is a protest like this, and they get a lot of free publicity."

Allen said that when he described "Custer's Revenge" to some Indian friends, "they thought it was funny. One of my first customers was an Indian," Allen said. "He was going to show it to the guys. He thought it was real funny."